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ABSTRACT

As a supplement to "What You Need To Know About Riding The School Bus," this booklet answers some of the most common questions concerning transportation for students with special needs. Using a simple question/answer format, the booklet addresses 22 issues regarding scheduling, the duties and responsibilities of the driver/aide, parent responsibility, behavior, and other topics. Questions include: (1) How soon after placement will a child's transporation be arranged? (2) Can pickup/drop off times change throughout the year? (3) What if a child is picked up and delivered to a location other than his home? (4) Is a child entitled to door-to-door service? (5) What if a child moves to another part of the county? (6) What accommodations are needed when a child requires a wheelchair? (7) Are aides available on every bus? (8) Can buses come back for children who are not at the bus stop in time? (9) Does participation in special education guarantee transporation? (10) What accommodations will be made for children unable to conform to bus rules? (11) Can safety seats by provided? (12) How will deaf parents be notified of early closings and bus trouble? (13) How will hearing-imparied children communicate with drivers and aides? (PB)

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Transportation for Students With Special Needs

A Supplement to: What You Need to Know About Riding the School Bus

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Office of Special and Alternative Education
and the
Division of Transportation
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Rockville, Maryland

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TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

This document provides supplemental information to the MCPS publication: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS. This supplement answers many of the most frequently asked questions concerning transportation for students with special needs. Since students with special needs are in all our schools, the information is relevant for all staff members and all parents of students with special needs. The following questions and answers deal with typical situations which have arisen over the years.

SCHEDULING

Q1. How soon will transportation be arranged for a child after a placement decision has been made by an Area Admission, Review, or Dismissal (AARD) or Central Admission, Review, or Dismissal (CARD) Committee?

A1. It usually takes an average of 10 days for transportation to be arranged for a student on a new bus route. If the child can be transported on an existing route, the time may be less. PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY CHILD WHO IS PLACED BY AN AARD OR CARD MEETING DECISION HELD TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE START OF SCHOOL MAY NOT BE TRANSPORTED UNTIL THE MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER. Although every effort will be made to arrange transportation as quickly as possible, parents may have to transport their child for a maximum of two weeks.

Q2. Can the pickup and/or drop off time change from one day to the next through-

out the school year? What if parents are unable to be at home at the scheduled time?

A2. It is impossible to pinpoint the exact minute of arrival or departure of the bus. Children are constantly being enrolled and withdrawn from programs because they move or their placements change. The Division of Transportation asks that parents allow for a 5- to 10-minute leeway on either the arrival or departure time of the bus. If parents are not available for these few minutes, perhaps a neighbor could help on days when parents have to leave or can't get home before bus time.

Q3. What if a child is picked up and delivered to a different location other than the child's home?

A3. Transportation can only provide a difference in the pickup point in the morning and the drop-off point in the afternoon on a consistent basis. Arrangements for changes from one day to the next cannot be made. Every effort should be made to keep the child or day-care as close to home as possible. This improves transportation for everyone.

Q4. Is a child entitled to door-to-door service?

A4. If students have a handicapping condition that does not permit them to meet a bus at a designated street corner, door-to-door service will be requested through the SARD, AARD, CARD process. However, in some cases it is not possible to offer door-to-door service because it is not safe, e.g., courts, parking lots, high density traffic areas, etc. School bus safety standards must be adhered to and followed at all times.

Q5. When a child moves to another part of the county, will the same bus pick the child up?

A5. A move may necessitate a bus change. Parents should contact the principal or program supervisor to inform them of the expected date of the move and the new location, so that they can alert the Division of Transportation of the change.

Q6. What notification is needed when a child who could previously take the bus has to start coming to school in a wheelchair?

A6. Contact the principal or program supervisor so that they can make the necessary arrangements with the Division of Transportation. The bus the child uses may not be able to accommodate a wheelchair or an additional wheelchair. A bus change may be necessary.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBLITIES— DRIVER/AIDE

Q7. What are the driver's responsibilities?

A7. To operate the bus safely, to transport the students, and to maintain a timely schedule.

Q8. What are the duties of the aide while on the bus?

A8. To ensure the safe transporting of all the students on the bus and assure that seat belts, wheelchairs, harnesses, etc., are secure and, in some cases, that students remain in their seats when they do not require a restraining device. The aide maintains discipline and reports problems to the schools. Aides are required to help students on and off the bus only as far as the curb.

Q9. Can an aide come to the door to pick up and drop off a child?

A9. Attendants are only permitted to work with children in the immediate vicinity of the bus. They are not allowed to assist the child beyond the curb.

Q10. Are there aides on every bus?

A10. No. When children are placed in special education programs, their needs are assessed by a staff of specialists. Based on the specialists' recommendations, aides will be provided as well as safety devices, such as seat belts, harnesses, and car seats. (*School busses are exempt from the Maryland law requiring car seats for all children under the age of 4.) Generally, the emo-

tionally impaired, profoundly and severely handicapped, orthopedically handicapped, or pre-academic/early childhood classes have bus attendants.

Q11. Why wouldn't the bus driver deliver medicine a parent may want to give to him/her?

A11. According to a joint Montgomery County Public School/Montgomery County Health Department agreement, parents must bring medication to school. This agreement is made in the interest of child safety to prevent the possibility of other students taking the medication. A child may carry medication on the bus if it is in a locked metal container to which only the parent and the school have a key. The box must be transported locked in both directions. Montgomery County Public Schools' bus regulations forbid the carrying of glass containers on buses.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

Q12. What is the parents' responsibility?

A12. Have the child ready and at the bus stop 5 minutes before scheduled pick-up. Tight scheduling does not permit buses to wait or blow the horn for your child. You must make provisions to have your child supervised by a responsible person both in the morning and the afternoon. Elementary students who are not met in the afternoon will be taken back to either the school or the administrative office in your area. If parents wish exceptions to this rule, they must make a written request and have it approved by the principal. A copy will be forwarded to the Division of Transportation. Allow adequate time. If your address, phone number, or day-care arrangements change, please notify the principal or program supervisor.

Q13. Can exceptions be made to allow students to be discharged without an adult at home?

A13. See answer A12, provided you can document how the safety and well-being of the student will be insured.

Q14. If a parent is late getting a child out to the bus stop, can the bus come back and get him/her?

A14. No, traffic and driver obligations to other routes do not make this possible. Parents should transport the child to school as quickly as possible so that he/she does not miss important classroom activities. Special education buses are not equipped with two-way radios.

BEHAVIOR

Q15. Is a child guaranteed transportation because he/she is in special education?

A15. Transportation is provided by law as a related service. If the handicapping condition permits and it is safe to do so, students may be required to walk to school when attending their home school.

Q16. If a child cannot conform to bus rules, what type of transportation will be provided?

A16. Alternative means of transportation may be necessary for students who cannot conform to bus riding rules and whose disruptive behavior creates an unsafe condition for other students, the bus driver, and the motoring public. It is not safe to transport physically aggressive children on buses. Violent behavior or physical aggression is not tolerated. The child's safety is our primary concern. Safety concerns govern all decisions about transporting children.

Q17. How will discipline problems with a child be handled?

A17. Routine problems are referred to the school on discipline report forms completed by the driver or the bus attendant. The school administrators take appropriate action when deemed necessary, including suspension from school, suspension from riding privileges, detention, or other disciplinary measures

used to enforce good conduct on the bus.

GENERAL

Q18. A child is too young to ride the bus without a safety seat. Can a safety seat be provided?

A18. Child safety harnesses are now available for all young children and will be provided on request.

Q19. How will a deaf parent be notified in the event that the bus breaks down or there is an emergency school closing?

A19. The child's school has Teletypewriter (TTY) equipment, and will make all possible efforts to notify the parent.

Q20. How will a hearing impaired child communicate with the bus driver and aide?

A20. The Division of Auditory Programs is holding training programs for special education bus drivers and aides to teach them basic sign language.

Q21. Can a bus driver be informed of special diet requirements, e.g., does not permit chocolate?

A21. The school instructs all bus personnel not to give any food to students on the bus because of the many special diets and restrictions. The school informs the bus personnel at the beginning of each school year of special restrictions. It is advisable for parents to talk with their driver and aide about the special dietary needs of their child.

Q22. A child has an electric wheel chair. Are there any special guidelines that must be followed?

A22. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.06.07.03 which became effective July 1, 1985, states that liquid acid batteries may not be transported in any school vehicle after February 17, 1986. For additional information, contact the transportation specialist at 840-8154.

If parents have additional questions or concerns about special education transportation, they may also call the special and alternative education assistant in the Division of Transportation at 840-8154.

RESOURCE LIST

Division of Transportation	840-8130
Area 1 Transportation	649-7282
Area 2 Transportation	983-2525
Area 3 Transportation	353-0885
Special Education Transportation Unit	840-8154
Area 1 Supervisor of Special Services	649-6400
Area 2 Supervisor of Special Services	299-5583
Area 3 Supervisor of Special Services	353-0833
Office of Special and Alternative Education	279-3604
Department of Special Education and Related Services	279-3135